

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 271600Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1967

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

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E.O. 1165-: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJ: DISORDERS IN BASQUE COUNTRY

REF: MADRID 3573

1. PRESS COVERAGE OF DISORDERS IN BASQUE COUNTRY AND GOVT COUNTERMEASURES HAS DIMINISHED MARKEDLY-- BUT NOT ENTIRELY--SINCE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR DECREE OF MAY 21 DECLARING BASQUE PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION "CLASSIFIED SUBJ (REFTEL)." INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE OF MAY 26, WHICH CARRIED REPORT BY MIGUEL ACOCA THAT MORE THAN 1300 BASQUE DISSIDENTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN GOVT'S CURRENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST ETA SEPARATISTS, WAS SEQUESTERED BY MINISTRY OF INFORMATION. QUESTIONED BY PRESS ABOUT SCOPE OF NEWS BLACKOUT FOLLOWING MAY 23 COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, INFORMATION MINISTER HERRERA ESTEBAN ASSURED THAT MEASURE DOES NOT CLOSE OFF ALL REPORTING AND THAT THIS MINISTRY WOULD "FILTER THROUGH OPPORTUNE NEWS WITH GREATEST POSSIBLE GENEROSITY." ASKED WHETHER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAD DISCUSSED MAY 22 DEMONSTRATION BY EXTREME-RIGHTISTS WITH POLICE ENCOURAGEMENT IN MADRID AT WHICH ANTI-GOVT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEAFLETS WERE CIRCULATED, HERRERA SAID MINISTERS HAD

"CONDEMNED THIS FORM OF DIALOGUE." PRESS HAS BEEN UNDERSTANDABLY RESTRAINED IN COMMENTING ON BLACKOUT. ONLY MADRID CATHOLIC DAILY YA COMMENTED EDITORIALY THAT BLACKOUT WOULD INCREASE RUMORS AND EXAGGERATIONS ABOUT BASQUE SITUATION RATHER THAN CURB THEM.

2. AMONG ITEMS "FILTERED THROUGH" BY MINISTRY OF INFORMATION WAS LOGOS REPORT FROM BILBAO CITING OFFICIAL SOURCES TO EFFECT THAT 79 PERSONS HAVE BEEN ARRAIGNED SINCE CURRENT STATE OF EXCEPTION ANNOUNCED, 29 OTHERS ARE BEING HELD FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION, AND 98 OTHER PERSONS WERE DETAINED AND THEN RELEASED. AMONG THOSE ARRESTED WERE FOUR BASQUE PRIESTS ACCUSED OF AIDING AND ABETTING OR PARTICIPATING IN ETA. NUMBER OF PRIESTS ARRESTED IN CURRENT CRACKDOWN NOW STANDS AT EIGHT. CONSULATE BILBAO CONFIRMS MAY 24 KILLING BY POLICE OF TEENAGE STUDENT AT ONDAROA IN INCIDENT THAT BEGAN WITH SMALL GROUP OF STUDENTS PUBLICLY SINGING SONGS IN BASQUE. INCIDENT HAS NOT APPEARED IN SPANISH MEDIA. CONSULATE BILBAO REPORTS ARMED POLICE STILL MUCH IN EVIDENCE IN BILBAO AND FREQUENT SEARCHES CONTINUE. LEVEL OF VIGILANTE INCIDENTS, HOWEVER, HAS SHOWN SOME DECLINE.

3. COMMENT. LARGE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN RELATIVELY LOW OFFICIAL ARREST TOTALS AND THOSE REPORTED BY INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCIES AND PARTIALLY CORROBORATED BY CONSULATE BILBAO PROBABLY STEMS FROM DIFFERING DEFINITIONS OF ARREST. APPARENTLY LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PICKED UP IN AREA FOR SUCH MINOR INFRACTIONS AS LACK OF IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS AND HELD LESS THAN 72 HOURS DO NOT ENTER STATISTICS.
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